



MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

**NOAA
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
NORTHEAST REGION
HABITAT CONSERVATION DIVISION**

August 2004

GLOUCESTER, MA OFFICE, ONE BLACKBURN DRIVE, GLOUCESTER, MA 01930

US/CANADA REGIONAL COLLABORATION UPDATE

The efforts of the Habitat Division and those of our partners at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada (DFO) were successful in adding habitat issues to the bilateral discussions of the US/Canada Steering Committee. This Committee, led by Regional Director Pat Kurkul and Regional Director General Neil Bellefontaine, already has working groups for fishery management and protected resource topics. A Draft Guidance Document for habitat topics was prepared and a workshop held between the US and Canada regional habitat staffs last May in Woods Hole to craft the recommendation subsequently accepted by both Directors at their most recent meeting. The accepted recommendation authorizes a Fishery Habitat Working Group to be convened under the US/Canada Steering Committee to collaborate on a variety of habitat topics having transboundary implications. The working group will be co-chaired by NOAA Fisheries and DFO and will begin by examining the common criteria for identification of ecologically important, sensitive, essential, or critical habitats. The benefits will be to increase communication in the area of habitat conservation, further knowledge, provide a basis of consistency of purpose, and strengthen Canada/US cooperation on marine conservation and ecosystem-based approaches in our North Atlantic waters. (Peter.Colosi@noaa.gov, 978/ 281-9332 or Kathi.Rodrigues@noaa.gov, 978/ 281-9324)

DREDGING FOR SCHOONERS IN LERMOND COVE

The Rockland Port District and Marine Traditions Group have requested a Section 10 permit from the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) to develop a marina in Lermond Cove in Rockland, Maine. The project includes a shore based ramp leading to two lines of floats secured to piles. An area approximately 42,000 square feet will be dredged to -12MLW, removing 10,000 cubic yards of sand, silt, and clay. Dredge spoils will be removed to an upland disposal site. As designed, the floats will encroach on the federal navigation channel. Federal channels must be equally accessible to all. The applicant is working to deauthorize this portion of the federal channel in Lermond Cove to allow use of the needed area by a private entity. The marina would support 5 commercial schooners that operate out of Rockland. NOAA Fisheries will provide comments in response to the public notice, including essential fish habitat conservation

recommendations. (sean.mcdermott@noaa.gov, 978/ 281-9113)

TWO NEW FISH LIFTS PROPOSED ON SEBASTICOOK RIVER

The Burnham and Benton Falls hydroelectric projects on the Sebasticook River are expected to have fish lifts installed as part of the 1998 Kennebec Hydro Developers Group (KHDG) Agreement. Draft fish lift plans for the Burnham project have been submitted to the resource agencies for review. Benton Falls and Burnham are the second and third dams on the Sebasticook River above the Fort Halifax Dam. The Fort Halifax dam is proposed to be breached, also, in accordance with options outlined in the KHDG Agreement.

(sean.mcdermott@noaa.gov, 978/ 281-9113)

FERC ORDER GRANTING REHEARING ON WEST WINTERPORT PROJECT

After the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) amended their Order for Surrender with dam removal of the John C. Jones project in West Winterport, NOAA Fisheries, along with U.S. Department of the Interior, and the Atlantic Salmon Commission, filed a motion to intervene and request for rehearing. All requests for rehearing were granted to provide additional time for consideration. The Commission anticipates issuing an order on this matter by 12 Oct 2004. The original order for surrender of the John C. Jones project issued on 28 June 2002 included dam removal. FERC modified the order on 18 June 2004 deleting the dam removal requirement. (sean.mcdermott@noaa.gov, 978/ 281-9113)

WEAVER'S COVE LNG DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT AND PUBLIC NOTICE ISSUED

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement and the ACOE Public Notice has been issued for the proposed Weaver's Cove LNG (liquefied natural gas) facility in Fall River, MA. The proposed project includes the dredging of a minimum of 2.6 million cubic yards of material from the Taunton River and Mount Hope Bay, the installation of a pipeline within the Taunton River, and permanent fill of coastal habitats for associated LNG terminal development. NOAA Fisheries is concerned with foreseeable impacts on winter flounder spawning habitat, shellfish resources, and anadromous fishery resources within the project area. NOAA Fisheries is currently in the process of reviewing this project, and will be providing EFH conservation recommendations to the FERC and the ACOE for the protection of NOAA trust resources.

(Christopher.Boelke@noaa.gov, 978/ 281-9131)

JAMES J. HOWARD MARINE SCIENCES LABORATORY, HIGHLANDS, NJ 07732

OFFSHORE WINDPOWER GENERATION

Stan Gorski participated in a conference call with members of the Mid-Atlantic Federal Partners on the Environment (MAFPE) on August 5. Others on the call included representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), National Park Service, U.S. Geological Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the National Forest Service. The purpose of this call was to share information on the progress each agency was making with regard to developing policies concerning the placement and operation of offshore wind power generators in the Mid-Atlantic.

In this case, the emphasis focused on the proposal by Cape Wind Associates to place wind generators in Nantucket Sound, Massachusetts.

An environmental impact statement will shortly be released which should discuss the potential impacts of these generators. Until the information is reviewed, none of the agencies is prepared to establish a position. FWS representatives noted concern with potential impacts on Indiana bats and birds. They also mentioned that the Minerals Management Service may have some jurisdiction in this area. (Stanley.W.Gorski@noaa.gov , 732/ 872-3037)

NEPTUNE REGIONAL TRANSMISSION SERVICE

Habitat staff reviewed and provided comments on an application by Neptune Regional Transmission Service, LLC, to install a submarine electric cable system connecting the First Energy Raritan Substation in Sayreville, New Jersey to the Long Island Power Authority Substation in Hempstead, New York. The supplemental public notice describes several significant modifications to the original proposal including changes to the landfall location in New York, increases in the area of dredging across the federal navigation channels, and the dredging across an additional federal navigation channel. (Karen.Greene@noaa.gov , 732/ 872-3023; Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-6504; or Stanley.W.Gorski@noaa.gov , 732/ 872-3037)

WIGGINS PARK MARINA

Habitat staff attended a pre-application meeting for the construction of a marina on the Delaware River in Camden, New Jersey's waterfront at Wiggins Park. As part of Camden's master plan for the river front area, the marina would provide 106 slips in an under-utilized portion of the park and would require dredging. The applicant, Cooper Ferry Development Association, had met with state and federal agencies in 2001 and redesigned the project to minimize the size of the project and to avoid impact on existing beds of wild celery grass (*Vallisneria americana*) which provide important habitat for fisheries resources. However, a survey for wild celery grass was performed in 2002 which mapped the grass in the area of the new proposal as well. The 2003 New Jersey Coastal Zone Management Rules prohibit dredging in submerged aquatic vegetation. The project may be redesigned to utilize an area offshore of the wild celery grass. (anita.riportella@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3116)

CITY OF CAMDEN

Habitat staff met with officials from the City of Camden regarding the city's sewage system upgrades. Responding to an Administrative Consent Order (pursuant to NJSA 58:25) to provide long-term control of solids and floatables from the City's combined sewer overflow regulators (CSO), modifications to the existing sewer system are required. Seven of nineteen CSOs located within the project area are within freshwater wetlands or wetlands transition zones which would necessitate state and federal permits. The proposal would provide traps (bar and screen) for ½ inch or greater material which would need to be manually cleaned out periodically. Outfall reconstruction includes drainage into Newton Creek, Cooper River, and the Delaware River. (anita.riportella@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3116)

CROWN LANDING LNG

Habitat staff met with representatives of Crown Landing, Inc. along with state and federal agencies on August 19, 2004 to discuss the proposed liquefied natural gas terminal project in Logan Township on the Delaware River. As a cooperating agency, NOAA Fisheries has reviewed the draft environmental resource reports and provided comments to the group and participated in discussions. Outstanding issues include compensation for impacts due to dredging of shallow water for the berthing area for the vessel and methods for minimizing impacts on living marine resources due to impingement and entrainment during removal of water from the Delaware River that provides ballast for the vessel as the liquefied natural gas is off-loaded. (anita.riportella@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3116)

MILFORD, CT OFFICE, 212 ROGERS AVENUE, MILFORD, CT 06460

WATERFRONT ESPLANADE PROPOSED AT UNITED NATIONS

Staff met at the Milford Field Office with the proponents of a waterfront park development proposed in the East River at the United Nations headquarters in New York City to discuss information needs and permitting procedures. The proposal is under consideration in conjunction with a major renovation of the existing structures and accompanying development of a new office tower to the south. Continued dialogue with the project proponents is expected in the coming months. (Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-6504)

GOETHALS BRIDGE MODERNIZATION UPDATE

Milford Field Office staff participated in a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) scoping meeting concerning a future proposal by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey to replace the existing Goethals Bridge across the Arthur Kill between New Jersey and Staten Island, New York. Future coordination on the NEPA document will commence in the coming months.

(Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-6504)

EMERGENCY BANK STABILIZATION PROPOSED FOR NORTHPORT, NY

Staff completed coordination pursuant to the essential fish habitat (EFH) provisions of the Magnuson- Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and, more generally, pursuant to the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act aspects of the subject Section 14 emergency shoreline protection project. Due to the scope and nature of the proposed activities as well as the habitat protection measures built into this proposal, our finding was that project authorization and conduct would have only a minimal adverse effect on EFH and other resources of concern. Section 7 coordination pursuant to the Endangered Species Act is being conducted separately with staff from the Northeast Region's Protected Resources Division.

(Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-6504)

UPCOMING STAFFING CHANGE AT MILFORD FIELD OFFICE

Effective late September, 2004, Milford's administrative assistant, Tucker Currie, will resign from his contract position to complete graduate work in Massachusetts. While we will miss Tucker's many contributions to our team, we are confident that he will enjoy great success in his chosen field. Mike and Diane look forward to the arrival of Stephanie Daniels, who will assume

the administrative assistant duties at our field office shortly after Tucker's departure. Please make Stephanie feel welcome upon her arrival! (**Michael.Ludwig@noaa.gov**, **Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov**, 203/ 882-6504)